

*For Mr. Knight
with Mrs. Knight*

PEACE AND UNION

with Mr. Douglas's

RECOMMENDED TO

THE ASSOCIATED BODIES OF

REPUBLICANS

AND

ANTI-REPUBLICANS;

By WILLIAM FRENCH, M. A.

FELLOW OF JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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PLACE AND UNION

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THE ASSOCIATED

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AND

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FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

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PEACE and UNION.

THE royal proclamations and the number of associated bodies on various pretexts in different parts of the kingdom are a sufficient proof, that the minds of men are at present greatly agitated; and that the utmost vigour of government, aided by the exertions of every lover of his country, is necessary to preserve us, from falling into all the horrors attendant on civil commotions. Having been warned of our danger, it becomes us to consider, by what means we may escape the impending evil: and no one should take a decisive part, without weighing fully and impartially the consequences of his conduct. The assassinations, murders, massacres, burning of houses, plundering of property, open violations of justice, which have marked the progress of the French revolution, must stagger the boldest republican in his wishes to overthrow any constitution: and on the other hand he must be a weak or a wicked man, who lost in admiration of the beauties of a voluptuous and effeminate court, forgets the miseries of the poor subjects, whose bodies were bowed down to the grindstone for its support, and brands with every mark of aristocrattick insolence the efforts of those patriots, who put an end to the despotism of the antient government

PEACE (12th) UNION
government. It is an awful example, which providence holds out to an astonished world; and happy will that nation be, which derives from it lessons of wisdom. Surely there cannot be a dissentient voice on this opinion; and no blame can that writer incur, who calls on the contending parties in our own country, to make a proper use of the divine judgements, and instead of exasperating each other by useless invectives, to unite cordially in their endeavours to promote the common good, and to remove those grievances, if any such there be, which occasion the present discontent.

If the dispute between the contending parties were solely this, whether the present government should be overthrown or not, the matter might be brought to a speedy issue. It would be urged on the one side, that the government has for these hundred years last past been acknowledged as the best in Europe, and unless a much better is pointed out to us, it will be unwise in the extreme to destroy a system, under which we have experienced so much publick and private happiness. The advocates for a republick may answer, that the government among many bad ones was really the best, but the expences of it were enormous, a thousand millions of money have been drawn from the subjects, which, had they been expended on the country, would have converted it
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into a paradise, and we have now before us the instances of America and France, which on the ruins of their antient forms have erected much nobler edifices. Let us see, whether a reasonable and moderate man may not be able to bring these parties nearer to each other. The governments of the rest of Europe are in general supposed by all Englishmen to be much worse than their own. In common with them ours took its origin from the feudal system, but from a variety of causes most of the evils attendant on that system, which retained their force on the continent have been, in our country gradually abolished; that the expences of government have been enormous must be confessed by all parties, but this is not so much owing to the form of our constitution, as to the wretched plan, introduced in the last century, of anticipating in one the revenues of the succeeding years. Let us cast a veil over this failing of our common ancestours, and endeavour, that posterity shall have no reason to reproach us, for following with open eyes so shameful an example. The present situation of France forbids us, to consider as yet its constitution as worthy of imitation. It has not received the sanction of experience, and we must wait till the wretched despots, who with unparalleled insolence dared to interrupt its course, consent to leave a nation in possession of the undoubted right

right to form its own internal government. Much less can America be urged as an example for us: our customs, laws and situation have inured us to habits unknown to the new world, and a sudden change from our form to theirs might be as prejudicial to the happiness of this country, as the imposition of our constitution might be to the inhabitants of America. Besides, if instead of the constitutions of France and America the most perfect system, that human ingenuity can devise, should be presented to us, it does by no means follow, that we should be justifiable in forcing the acceptance of it on our fellow countrymen. Every change is attended with danger, and none should be adopted, where the individuals injured by it are very numerous in proportion to those, who are benefited. The happiness of this generation is to be taken in to the estimate, and it is not sufficient to assure us, that the prospects of a future race will be improved by our schemes. Where is the man, who can look so far forward into futurity, as to convince us, that our successors might not from a different concatenation of circumstances receive far greater blessings, than we can bestow on them by the ruin of ourselves. As therefore the overthrow of our constitution, with or without the introduction of the most perfect system, could not be compassed without injuring a vast number of
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our fellow creatures, it should seem, that the contending parties might accede nearer to each other, if it could be proved, that our government is susceptible of improvement, and that various changes might be introduced for the benefit of the community at large, without injuring a single individual. If this should appear to be the case, we may, consistently with our duty to ourselves and posterity, take the proper steps for meliorating our condition, and leave to future generations the care of bringing government to the utmost point of perfection.

There is no subject, on which the contending parties are so much at variance, as on that of parliamentary reform. On the one hand it is asserted, that the constitution, as settled at the revolution, must remain inviolate; on the other, that the corruptions of government render a reform in the representation of the people, and the duration of parliaments absolutely necessary. Reform is a very vague word, and it is too often made either a term of reproach or commendation, as it suits the interest of the speaker. The true sense of the word implies, that the things to be reformed had been previously in a better state; and that the intention of the reformer is to bring them to their original destination. Let us then divide our disputed topick into its two component parts, a reform of the duration of parliaments, and

the representation of the people, and considering each separately, see whether we may not on some points bring the contending parties to an agreement.

I. On the duration of Parliaments. One party is for shortening this duration, and reducing it to a period, on which there is a variety of opinions, some being for triennial, some for biennial and others for annual parliaments. Here we find a common point of union, for the other contending party declares its attachment to the government founded at the revolution, in which triennial parliaments are a considerable feature. We may say then to the advocates for shortening the duration of parliaments, agree that three years shall be the period, and the other contending party must, unless it hath lost every sentiment of propriety, concur with you in promoting so salutary a measure. If it doth not, the publick must see clearly, that its reverence for the constitution founded at the revolution is merely a pretence, to gain over to its side the favour of a deluded populace.

II. On a reform of the representation of the people.

The most clamorous person for this species of reform, might be staggered with a simple question. Have the people of England been ever so well represented as at the present moment?

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The number of votes in several boroughs has been considerably diminished, in others much enlarged, since the charters were first given to them: but it is not improbable that the number on the whole has been increased. In counties the qualification for a vote is a freehold worth forty shillings a year; and if we reflect on the increase of riches in this country within the last hundred years, we cannot hesitate to affirm that the number of freeholders must have been considerably enlarged. If therefore the mere increase of the number of voters were an object to one of our contending parties, we might tell them, that time was gradually removing their complaints: but a wise and temperate man would not give such an answer, when he considered, that time was also increasing some complaints, and that government is properly called on to rectify the abuses prevailing in several boroughs. In the course of not many years must the electors of one place grapple in the waves for their town, and at present a septennial consequence is given to a heap of ruins. This is a real evil, and ought to be redressed, and it must be redressed, as soon as men turn from the clamorous loquacity of pretended orators and politicians to the sober dictates of common sense. The severest sarcasm against the house of commons is to be found in the writings of a parliamentary declaimer, distinguished

guished by his pursuits of reform even to the privacies of his sovereign and the remote corners of the east, while he remains a declared enemy to the word, when it comes home to himself and his own connections. "The house of commons, says this writer, is within itself a much more subtle and artful combination of parts and powers, than people are generally aware of. What knits it to the other members of the constitution, what fits it to be at once the great support and the great controul of government, what makes it of such admirable service to that monarchy, which, if it limits, it secures and strengthens, would require a long discourse belonging to the leisure of a contemplative man not to one, whose duty it is to join in communicating practically to the people the blessings of such a constitution." In other words by means of rotten boroughs men of fortune are able to raise a party against, and to clog the wheels of government, by means of places and pensions government is enabled to oppose them: the house is like a field of battle, with this difference only, that the victorious party changes seats and opinions with the conquered, and the contest is renewed.*

The

* If to deal out the most virulent invectives against persons in possession of power, if to coalesce with those very persons to gain

The fact then being undeniable, that several of our boroughs have grown worse since the revolution, we may fairly call on our contending parties to concur in rectifying this abuse. The evil might without much inconvenience be remedied by a plan similar to the one following. Let a list be made out of the voters in every borough, and let it be ordered by parliament, that every borough, not having a thousand voters, shall out of the inhabitants of the town or hundred gradually raise them to that number. It is said gradually, otherwise the new comers might be too insolent with their acquired power; and on that account the boroughs having five hundred voters should increase their number by fifty every year, those under that number by twenty or thirty. Thus the boroughs will be brought gradually

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gain a share of that power, if to draw down the tears and shatter the nerves of fashionable sensibility, and overwhelm with opprobrious language a person, whose power once extended over a vast empire, if these are the marks of a great orator and politician, the writer, whom I have quoted, carries away the palm from every hero in every age. Whether Mr. Hastings is guilty or not of the high crimes laid to his charge, I shall not pretend to determine, and it appears to me, that very few indeed will be able to lay their hands on their breasts, and from a perusal of the evidence and speeches declare upon their honour, that he is either guilty or not guilty. The speeches of the celebrated declaimer above alluded to, must from the nature of his language, have made a great impression on many minds in favour of the much injured governor.

nearer to their original form; but neither party must imagine, that the mere increase of voters will without other steps secure the integrity of the electours or the representatives.

It is a trite remark that to a foreigner the people of England seem every seven years infected with madness. On the one hand are to be seen gentlemen of the first rank ruining their estates to ingratiate themselves with the populace, on the other the people giving themselves up to every species of intemperance. This is an evil, which calls loudly for redress; and it would be well if the contending parties, confining themselves solely to the rectifying of this abuse, would lay a foundation for the praises and improvement of posterity.

If vast multitudes are permitted to be called together, and treated at the expence of the candidates, this evil will always remain; and the only way to remove it is by devising some plan, which shall secure to the electour an easy way of giving his vote with as little infringement on his time as possible. The practice of calling a county together on a day of nomination is attended with manifest inconvenience. The county cannot be assembled, and the mode of determining the sense of such meetings is vague and inconclusive.

If

If there is any necessity for a day of nomination, the advantages expected from it, might be better secured by delegates from parishes summoned by the sheriff of the county. Thus on an appointed day let the freeholders meet in their respective parishes, and every person being at liberty to name a candidate, let them elect a delegate to carry the list to the general meeting. At this meeting let the delegates confer together in the presence of the sheriff, as president, on the merits of the candidates, and having given their votes let each take with him the result, to be laid before the freeholders on the day of election. On that day the delegate being the president of the parish meeting should acquaint the electors with what had passed on the day of nomination, and receiving their votes should make out two lists, the one to be carried to the sheriff, the other to be preserved in the parish. On a subsequent day the delegates should again meet the sheriff, who casting up the numbers should declare those to be the representatives, who had the majority of votes in their favour. Thus members would be returned to parliament with very little interruption to the industry of the country, and if we take into the estimate the bribes, the quarrels, the riots, the drunkenness, the profaneness, the blasphemies, the perjuries, which will be avoided by this plan, no one who is a friend

friend to religion or virtue can hesitate to give it his heartfelt concurrence.*

Our constitution, admitting a representative government, permits us to reason on it, and speculative men will naturally be led to pursue their researches on such a subject to a greater degree of refinement, than is pleasing to the vulgar, to whom they seem to be trifling with utopian schemes and imaginary ideas of perfection. Still men of thought should not be discouraged by the vague surmises of rude and uncultivated minds. Had the present constitution of our country been proposed to the valiant band under William the conquerour, it would have been received as an impracticable scheme, the wildest that the brain of man had ever conceived, and the schemes which we deride may be the means of innumerable blessings to future generations. Let the speculative man then indulge himself in his theories; and let us propose to him to enquire, whether representative government can be carried on to perfection, on a better plan than that laid down by an inspired legislatour, and adopted in part

* The term freeholder has been used, but there seems to be no reason, why the copyholders should be excluded from the right of suffrage. And instead of requiring a certain qualification in landed property from the candidate, any man who had a majority of votes should take his seat in the house and be allowed for obvious reasons five hundred a year for his attendance.

part by the wisest monarch, that ever sat on the English throne.

The divisions of hundreds and tithings being adopted, let the persons of age in each tithing elect a president, let the presidents of ten tithings elect the president of the hundred, the presidents of ten hundreds elect the president of the thousand and so on. Each division of ten thousand families should send two members to parliament. The voters should be taken by the heads of tithings, and carried by them to the heads of hundreds, to be conveyed to the heads of thousands, who with the head of the ten thousand should declare the representatives elected. Thus none but the officers would be put to any material inconvenience in giving their votes: the offices should be annual and biennial, the headships of tithings and hundreds annual, the rest biennial.

Such a division would not only be useful for the purposes of obtaining a better representation in parliament, but it might likewise restore the peace and tranquillity, which is said to have prevailed in the days of Alfred. Thus the presidents of hundreds and the superiour divisions might be invested with the power of a justice of the peace, an officer of the greatest publick utility, very much wanted at present in many extensive districts. From the presidents of hundreds the grand jury should always be selected, and the

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petty jury from the heads of tithings. All laws that have received the sanction of parliament should be sent to the presidents of ten thousands, by them to be distributed among the inferiour divisions, so that every law relating to the people in general should be sent to the heads of tithings, particular bills to the heads of hundreds and the superiour divisions. The laws received by the head of a tithing should be read to the tithing, and if objected to by the majority, the objection with the number of votes should be sent to the head of the hundred, and by him to the superiour officer and so on; and if it should appear that the majority of the kingdom was against any bill, it should be subjected to a revision in the next parliament. Thus would two main points be gained by this division of the country; the house of commons would, as far as human imperfection admits, be really a representation of the people, and all laws relating to the conduct of an individual would not only be known to him, but receive his approbation or censure.

We should pay too great a compliment to our countrymen by supposing them capable of receiving or acting under so enlarged a plan of representation. The minds of men must be more enlightened, the lower classes must be better instructed, a more familiar and friendly intercourse must

must take place between all ranks of society, before such a plan could produce its due effect.

This consideration ought to have some weight with the contending parties. The one might be spurred on to teach the lower classes by every mean in their power the blessings of a free and good government, and the ardour of the other for introducing new forms might, by reflecting on the real state of the peasantry of this country, be considerably repressed. And, by accustoming ourselves to reflect on the difficulties on both sides of the question, we might all with better temper listen to the remarks made on government by men of opposite parties; we should not confound republicans with levellers, and to the exaggerating encomiasters of the present constitution with all its defects, we might apply the words of eastern wisdom, Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth, a stranger and not thine own lips.*

To hear some persons talk of perfect representation, one would imagine that it must be the precursour of a second golden age. The wisdom of the nation would be collected as it were into a focus, but we forget that its folly would be as forcibly concentrated. If the majority of a nation consists of weak, ignorant, and barbarous

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* Prov. xxvii. 2,

characters, incapable of being meliorated by religion, and obstinately attached to vicious and bad customs, it cannot be supposed that their representatives should excell in virtue, or that the laws composed by them should be calculated for general happiness. If the people were superstitiously inclined, persecution against individuals of a different opinion would receive the sanction of their house of commons with the same ease, as it has been enforced by the edicts of a despotick prince: and the lover of peace and tranquillity, the philosopher whose researches extend our knowledge, and the cultivator of the arts, which soften and embellish life, would seek for that liberty under the shade of an arbitrary court, which was denied to them by the laws or conduct of a tumultuous rabble.††

Hence then let us seriously recommend to the contending parties to employ their thoughts on other topicks beside those of parliamentary reform, lest being attached to a single object, they overlook the abuses, which may gradually undermine the peace and happiness of society. Some of the associated bodies have very properly declared, that our constitution has provided the means

†† Zimmerman relates somewhere in his excellent work on solitude an anecdote of a gentleman who wished to enjoy the liberty of speaking his sentiments on all subjects. For this purpose he chose Zurich, staid there ten days, and then retired to Lisbon,

means of rectifying abuses, and they would do well to point out those which require immediate reform. We may celebrate in the loudest tone the praises of our constitution, yet if our laws are vague and inconclusive, easily to be wrested by the powerful, and too expensive for the poor, if punishments bear no proportion to crimes, and the most atrocious murderer is levelled with a petty delinquent, it must be confessed that a stranger would have reason to exclaim, the theory of your government is excellent, but your laws betray a degree of rudeness and barbarity not to be expected in so enlightened a nation.

Our laws stand certainly in need of reform, and it were to be wished that the leading powers in our senate would exert themselves in giving us a better code. The evil is acknowledged by all parties, but it is the supposed interest of one to increase by voluminous digests the intricacy of the law. It might be urged that the laws affecting the lower classes of the people should be equal, clear, and decisive, such that a school-boy might read them, and be brought up with a sense of their propriety, and a fear of offending them. This without doubt would be of great advantage to the poor; and the political writers of the last century recommended the practice of a neighbouring country, by which the rich might be equally benefited. Many of them are to their
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cost acquainted with the expensiveness of suits depending on the litigation of landed property, which would be at an end by the easy plan of registering it in every county. Some persons complain, that they have found a difficulty of recovering, or have even lost an estate from the imperfect registers of births in parishes, from which all that are not members of the church are excluded. Supposing a civil arrangement for these purposes, the land of every person and the births of all children might be so registered, as to prevent a multiplicity of law suits. A fiction in law is a mean at present of saving the country from the iniquity and oppression attending the absurd and barbarous custom of retailing property on remote descendants, but would it not be much better by acting in an open and direct manner to prevent the father from forgetting the ties of blood, and by abolishing entails entirely oblige every one to act up to the principles of justice. Manerial rights were of use in the feudal ages, but different times produce different customs, and a revival of all the laws in manours might be made beneficial to the lord and his dependant. Our game laws are cruel and oppressive, contrary to every principle of good government, and calculated only to produce a spirit of aristocrattick insolence in the higher, and that of meanness, pilfering, and plunder in the lowest classes

classes. It has been urged in their defence, that if it were not for them, we should be overrun with poachers; but in fact, as high duties made the smugglers, the game laws make the poachers. Destroy the game laws entirely, let game be sold freely in our markets, and the poachers, as the smugglers have done lately in many places, will return to the habits of useful industry. We must not omit here, that the higher classes will be benefited: for in what county can we go without hearing of the petty squabbles of country squires, about hares and partridges, nauseous tales, disgusting to every man of sense and a liberal education.

The amendment of the poor laws requires a cautious and skillfull hand, and much praise is due to some very respectable members of the house of commons, for endeavouring to excite the attention of their colleagues to this subject. There is an excellent precept in the mosaical law, which should be a guide to all legislatours; thou shalt not muzzle the ox which treadeth out the corn. The poor are the instruments of the ease, comfort, and luxury of the rich, and it would be contrary to the temper of englishmen as well as the spirit of christians to be ungrateful to those, from whom we all derive our support. If a labouring man does not receive sufficient wages to enable him to bring up a numerous family, and

to lay by something for his support in the decline of life, it is but common justice, that they, who have been enriched by his labours, should, when his strength is gone, make his latter days cheerful and comfortable. So far then from diminishing the poor rates, there seems, unless the price of labour should be considerably increased, sufficient reason for increasing them. The poor rates must, if the price of labour is given, increase with the increase of taxes; for every tax laid on the consumption of the poor is a great diminution of his pittance, and the halfpenny or farthing, a trifle to the tax imposers, is severely felt in the cottages of industry. Should these laws be ever revised, there is a class in society which may be greatly benefited; this is the class just above poverty, just above want themselves, but by means of rates reduced to a worse situation, than those who receive their benefactions. To follow the beautiful gradations of nature in all her operations, this class should be released from the poor rates: thus there would be three classes in society, that which pays to the relief of others, that which receives, and that which neither pays nor receives. A revision also cannot take place without relieving the poor from the restraints under which they at present labour in removing from one parish to another, and the expensiveness of litigation arising from the present code might perhaps be remedied.

remedied. But in these affairs we must, as was before mentioned, be particularly careful, lest the poor should be injured: the rich can take care of themselves, the poor have none to defend them, and the fault of most governments seems chiefly to consist in this, that they pay the most attention to the maintenance and support of the corinthian capitals of society, as some orders have been foolishly called, to the great neglect of the comfort and welfare of the most numerous and important part of the community.

The practice of the law at present, an evil, which time is likely to increase, threatens to render the profession unworthy of a man of liberal education. To set a young person down to copy declarations, pleas, replications, rejoinders, surrejoinders, rebutters, surrebutters, is not a probable mean of correcting his judgement, enlivening his imagination, or qualifying him to convince by the ardour of his eloquence. Yet it now seems necessary that Demosthenes and Cicero should give place to the precedents in the office of a special pleader: and, if our laws continue to increase with the same rapidity as they have done in the present reign, the future generation of barristers must sink into the level of vulgar mechanicks. Already we have seen the inferiority of the bar, when the best specimens of its rhetorick were compared with the genuine

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effusions of eloquence from our popular speakers. The oratours of antient times, we are informed, did not blush to receive information from the erudite professors of the law, and if the encouragement of eloquence were thought of sufficient importance, a similar arrangement of offices might not be without its use. Were the attornies confined to their present employment: were special pleaders, men of cool heads and fit for sedentary lives, occupied in arranging, explaining, digesting our statutes and acts of parliament, were it their business to take an action from the attorney's hands, decide on its legality, and put it into due form, to be presented with every statute or case relating to it to the barrister, the time of this latter character, the highest in the profession, might be employed in the pursuit of every species of liberal knowledge. It would not be expected from him, to have an antiquarian insight into our laws and customs, nor to enter into all the detail of an attorney's clerk; but we should look for elegance of language, propriety of expression, convincing eloquence, happy allusions, and to sum up the whole in a few words, we should expect to find in him both at the bar and at the table the gentleman and the scholar.*

* Since the inns of court have ceased to be places of education, and the exercises there are merely formal, might not the privilege of pleading at the bar be allowed to any one, in whom the plaintiff places confidence,

The tediousness of the law, as well as its uncertainty, has been a frequent subject of complaint; but, though deprecated by every one, there does not seem any disposition at present in the lords or commons to probe these evils to the bottom. Its language too is barbarous and rude: for, under the pretence of avoiding by infinite circumlocutions cavil and dispute, scarce an act of our legislature is intelligible to a man of tolerable capacity; and the jargon of a profession, which ought to use the clearest and best terms, is now become proverbial. We should therefore be much indebted to the contending parties, if they would unite their efforts in making an effectual reform in that part of our system, on which life, property, and reputation so much depend. The task is not so arduous, as may be apprehended: there are among us men of learning and abilities, as well qualified for this undertaking as the celebrated lawyers in the days of Justinian; and the only thing required on the part of the legislature and people is to be seriously persuaded, that internal good government is more productive of general happiness, than the interference in foreign politicks and the triumphs of a victorious navy.

In perusing the history of antient or modern times the connection, which has always taken place between religion and legislation must strike

every attentive reader. This union is supposed to be of a peculiar nature, and while in our own country the grave divine celebrates it as an alliance between church and state, the jolly toper no less religiously fills up the bumper to church and king. The latter character means no disrespect to his sovereign, by making him give place to an institution esteemed sacred by the vulgar; but the former, lamenting the loss of ancient splendour, is willing to retain as long as possible this last vestige of ecclesiastical power. Seventeen centuries ago the church, creeping on the ground, bowed its head to the authority of Cæsar, within three centuries after we find her in the embraces of a warlike emperor; the harlot soon learned to tread on the necks of kings, and, drenched with the blood of saints and martyrs, obtained universal empire. Our ancestors groaned under her iron yoke, the fruit of their industry was carried away to feed her pampered appetite, and to satiate her luxurious paramours. The island was completely devoted to her lust; but vice is never secure in its seat, it has no stable hold, the same capricious and inordinate passions, which tempt men to forsake the fair object of their betrothed love, lead them soon to cast away in disgust the loathsome prostitute. To capricious and inordinate passion we are indebted for deliverance from the harlots power: she can no longer free
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the subject from his allegiance, nor compell the monarch to accept the crown at the footstool of her throne. Her superiority is gone, and protestant divines should beware of applying those terms to a political institution of this country, which must involve them in all the guilt of anti-christian usurpation.

The alliance between church and state is a fiction, which could not be realized in this country, without subjecting the abettours of it to the penalties of high treason. We might as well talk of an alliance between army and state, navy and state, law and state. Would queen Elizabeth have permitted this language, and is it not equally certain, that such expressions must be displeasing to every branch of the Brunswick family? Has the state, from the moment it became protestant, ever made an alliance with any church, and do not all our ecclesiastical laws depend on the authority of parliament? Where does the church meet, where does it make laws, where does it propose terms of mutual kindness to her ally the state? In this island are two institutions called the churches of England and Scotland, for which the clergy of the church of England are ordered by law to command the prayers of every congregation. Are they both allies of the state? Is there also any alliance between the two sacred bodies? Let us beware of the deception couched
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in ambiguous terms; for there is no society in this country, that can pretend to make terms with the state, nor is there any person, whose authority does not depend on an act of parliament. And let divines be particularly cautious, lest king and people, recollecting the sufferings of former times, should be tempted to suspect, that, as long as there are priests, the laity is in danger of being duped by the priesthood.

The established church of England can be considered only as a political institution. The design of it is to celebrate at certain times religious worship, and to instruct the people in certain doctrines laid down by act of parliament. Whether the instruction communicated is suited to the present times, and whether the expence attending it is proportioned to the benefits, which the subject derives from it, are questions of political enquiry. The farmer and the land-holder complain, that tithes are a grievous oppression, that thereby industry is cramped, and our lands are deprived of their proper culture. Divines, say they, laid a claim in former ages to the produce of our fields, in consequence of a regulation for very different purposes in a distant region, and they not only persuaded our legislature to adopt it, but have exacted the odious tax in a manner unknown to the favoured people of god. The customs of Judea are no rule for this country,
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and consequently it is no argument against our present mode of paying the clergy, that we have deviated widely from the mosaical institution. We are interested only in the enquiry, whether a certain body of men should depend on government or the people for its subsistence, or by possessing a considerable stake in the landed property be in a great measure rendered independant of both. The question has on every side its difficulties. Supposing the clergy to be like the army or navy under the executive power, there is a danger in our complicated form of government, lest the regal part should absorb that of the other two bodies. For ten thousand men in black under the direction of an individual are a far more formidable body, than ten thousand times that number in arms, and more likely to produce the greatest injury to civil society.

If checks could be found to remedy the inconvenience attending the absolute dependance of the clergy on the crown, such a system would be found to possess great advantages: for, as the military are sent only, where their presence is necessary, the religious corps would be disposed in a manner more beneficial to the kingdom. We should not see them in groupes in some towns encouraging or rather being the patrons of every species of luxury, while extensive districts are entrusted to the care of a few curates: a regular disposition

disposition of them might take place, which, from a proper attention to the learning and morals in the candidates for the office of publick instructors, would be attended with infinite benefit to the lower classes of the community. Here then is a subject, which might usefully employ the thoughts of our contending parties. Let them endeavour to remove the complaints of our landholders, taking care at the same time that so large a body as the clergy should not be entrusted with any temporal power, and that the profession should possess such emoluments, as might render it a proper pursuit for men of liberal education.

Every thing in this world convinces us, that there is only one being in his own nature unchangeable. The institutions of man can scarce be suited to one generation, and the wisdom of government would in no instance more eminently display itself, than by accomodating its laws to the improvement of knowledge in every age. The parliament, which appointed, and the people, which received the form of worship now in use, entertained very different notions from ours on religious subjects. It could not be otherwise : for, by rejecting many articles in the creed of their ancestors, they entered into controversies, which paved the way for future improvement. This was perceived in the next century, but unfortunately the ruling powers, by calling together
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men of too discordant opinions, and endeavouring to reconcile parties separated from each other by a series of mutual injuries, confirmed by this experiment a truth, with which they ought to have been acquainted, that the councils of divines of different churches are never attended with success. The liturgy of the church of England is a composition derived from the mass book of Rome, over which if it has in some respects a manifest superiority, it is very far from that standard of purity in its arrangement, language, or doctrine, which is required from such compositions. The ablest writers in its defence acknowledge, that it is susceptible of improvement, but are fearful of the danger attending every reform. We have seen the cause of failure in the last century, and, to avoid the splitting on the same rock, might not the legislature appoint commissioners of its own church to revise the book of prayers, and to propose a form better suited to the present times? This should not however supersede the liturgy in present use. There may be congregations attached to the common liturgy, whose prejudices should be humoured, and, instead of forcing another on any one, the legislature need only permit the approved forms to be read in those churches, where the people are willing to give them admission. Thus continual improvements might be made in the form of worship, the more imperfect

liturgies would gradually disappear, and in a few centuries perhaps the religious antipathies of the present days would cease to influence the conduct and embitter the lives of our posterity.

The reform of our religious establishment cannot, it is obvious, engage our attention without some animadversions on a controversy, which has been lately carried on with a considerable degree of animosity. To preserve the establishment it was thought necessary in the last century, to require from every officer under the executive government a religious test. Of course a degree of honour has been attached to the believers or pretended believers of certain doctrines, and the dissentients have been involved in a corresponding portion of disgrace. In considering this question, we are to look upon these bodies merely as political factions; for, did we refer to the book, which both parties are supposed to make the guide of all their actions and opinions, the question will not admit a moments debate. By calling themselves christians, they ought in every instance to yield to our saviour's precepts and example, and there is not a proposition in Euclid clearer than this, that no body of christians is authorised by the gospel, to allure men to its party by civil emoluments, or on account of religious opinions to deprive them of civil advantages.

Is then a test necessary to preserve the political existence of the church of England? We shall be able to answer this question by considering the danger, that would immediately accrue from the removal of the test. In some of our manufacturing towns dissenters would share with churchmen in municipal offices: a few and very few would exercise in counties the office of justice of the peace. The latter office depending on the crown, the moment there was an appearance of danger, it might be removed by striking the disaffected out of the commission. Now, is it probable, that an institution, whose influence, from its own wealth considerable, is supported by that of the nobility and the greater part of the landed interest of this country, could receive any injury from the admission of a few persons in municipal offices. The supposition is absurd and the apprehension of danger must arise, from a suspicion of the dissenters receiving on the removal of the test a vast accession of numbers, united together in a firm resolution, to destroy the religious establishment. But persons, who reason in this manner, are not aware, that the dissenters do not by any means form a compact body; and that the three powers, presbyterians, baptists, and independants, allied together for one single purpose, would on the obtaining of that point, retire to their different camps, and be separated from

each other by the usual marks of theological hatred.

On what ground are we to expect an increase of their numbers? The majority of the people, who do not look forward to any thing but the fruits of their industry, will always go to that place of worship, which they think the best: and, unless it can be proved, that the worship of the three bodies above-mentioned is far superiour to that of the church of England, they must remain, as they have been for some time, increasing only with the increasing population of the country.

Let any man then compare together coolly the worship of these different bodies. The object of worship, generally speaking, for there are few congregations which worship only the one true god, is the same in all; some using a prescribed form, others what is called extempore prayer. The superiority on either side depends so much on the abilities of the speakers or readers, that, on considering the rank of life from whence they are respectively taken, and the advantages of education, which they enjoy, it will appear improbable, that the church of England should be inferior to its opponents. The harmonious numbers of Watt's hymns, the commonly received book among the dissenters, may be supposed to give them a superiority in one part of the service over the church; but the psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins,

Hopkins, though deficient in metre, do not inculcate unscriptural doctrines, nor does their language, though simple and unadorned, ever sink into the lullabies of the lyrick poet. The sermons of the church of England, whether considered as specimens of eloquence, as treatises of moral philosophy or didactick theology, do not suffer on a comparison with those of the dissenting party: and there are few churches, which could bear such language or sentiments, as are too frequently uttered in several meetings. Hence the danger, apprehended from the mode of worship among the three bodies above-mentioned, seems to be chimerical, and government has by a sufficiently accurate survey been informed, that the number of opponents to the church establishment cannot occasion any ground of alarm: but perhaps neither government, nor churchmen, nor dissenters are aware of the increase of a body, already more numerous and better organized than the latter party, and which may in no length of time occasion a revolution in our ecclesiastical history.

Although no danger is to be apprehended from the removal of the test, government may very fairly demand; what advantages shall we derive by departing from our old laws and favouring the dissenters? The answer is obvious. By removing a reasonable cause of complaint from the
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most industrious and peaceable of your subjects, you preserve a steadier attachment to the established authority. There is something in the heart of man, which revolts at oppression; and to be beloved, you must render yourselves worthy of affection. The conduct of churchmen towards dissenters has been, and is disgraceful in the extreme: it is time to cast away the leaven of party spirit, and to act as christians. By this, says our saviour, shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. Did the repeal of the test act depend only on one part of the legislature, it cannot be supposed, that the redress of the dissenters would be delayed a moment. For, how could the first magistrate deny that to a great part of the people, which, in different places acknowledging his authority, he claims for himself. Either he is a member of the church of England, or he is not. If he is a member of the church of England, by passing into Scotland he becomes a dissenter, but is not on that account deprived of his office: another form of religion prevails in Hanover, but he retains his electorate. What could prevent him then from saying to the dissenters; As my temporal office is not in other countries affected by my religious opinions, neither shall you suffer any civil injuries for dissenting from the establishment of England. Be peaceable citizens, and
worship

worship god as you please; your religion no where teaches you to disobey your civil governors, except when they presume to interfere in matters of conscience.

It is much to be lamented, that, in treating on a subject relating to religious opinions, we cannot persuade the professors of christianity, to abide by the commands of their common master: instead of which, not only the statesman, but those, who pride themselves on being ministers of the gospel, set up in direct opposition to him maxims of worldly policy. The line of truth is direct and clear, the paths of error are infinite. In the conflicts of passions and prejudice in a house of commons the still voice of christianity cannot always be heard; the statesman is too apt to consider it as a silly devised fable, well calculated to keep the people in order, and there are few willing to receive it in the only manner, which commands attention, as the direct word of god. Hence perhaps the dissenters would do well, to leave the state entirely to itself, content, as the early christians were, to draw men to a purer form of worship, and to trust to a change of opinion for entire relief from persecution. The most improbable tales were in early times vented of the christians; their meetings were burnt down, and their persons were assaulted. Is it to be wondered at, that the same practices should, by the enlightened infidel

infidel, the interested churchman, and the ignorant populace be in our days both repeated and applauded? The same passions will every where produce on certain minds the same effect; and the priest in every age, whether he celebrates the orgies of Bacchus, or solemnizes the rites of the Eucharist, will, should either his victims or his allowance fail, oppose in either case every truth, which threatens to undermine his altars, or weaken his sacerdotal authority.

The church stands certainly in need of reform, the dissenters would do well to consider also, whether they are not far, very far from the summit of christian perfection. The few of us dispersed over England, who through fear and love of the one true god, are obliged to separate ourselves from both parties, cannot but view with concern, that, while they are so much occupied in a matter of small temporal importance, the great truths of religion are neglected: and we must never let slip any opportunity of exciting them to examine and improve their separate forms of worship and religious communion. That christianity has made very little progress for the last fourteen hundred years, is obvious to every reader of ecclesiastical history, and the professors of it ought not to be surprized, since, during so long a period, the world has been under the influence of two opinions, nearly subversive of all true

true religion. The first is a very antient opinion, which it was the intention of the jewish dispensation to eradicate, by substituting in its place a long lost and almost self evident truth. That there is one god and only one god is supposed by many to be a truth attainable by human reason; but if it were not so, the authority of revelation has established it, and the whole heathen mythology is declared to be a fit object of ridicule.* Still this truth, confirmed by various acts of omnipotence, did not overcome entirely the prejudices of the chosen people of god; and as they associated with the worship of Jehovah that of the neighbouring nations, the great body of christians has imbibed, and glories in imbibing from the schools of Athens, opinions no where sanctioned

* A learned writer on the mythology of the ancients makes the following remarks on the grossness of their superstition.

"Who would imagine, that one of the wisest nations that ever existed, could rest satisfied with such idle fictions: and how can we account for these illusions, which overspread the brightest minds? We see knowing and experienced people inventing the most childish tales; lovers of science adopting them; and they are finally recorded by the grave historian: all which would not appear credible, had not we these evidences so immediately transmitted from them. And it is to be observed that this blindness is only in regard to their religion; and to their mythology, which was grounded thereupon. In all other respects they were the wisest of the sons of men." What will the writers on the mythology of the eighteenth century think a thousand years hence of the european fictions.

oned in scripture, and has associated the worship of created beings, with that of the god and father of Jesus Christ. So great a deviation from truth must necessarily be attempted with dreadful effects, the most solemn act of life is rendered childish, and the unbeliever confounding the purity of the gospel with the prejudice of its professors, thinks himself entitled to ridicule religion, and to despise christianity. Let churchmen and dissenters examine seriously how far they have deviated from the true faith, and as they reject many points established by the councils of the romish church, let them expunge every thing, which favouring of its leaven, is to be found in presbyterian synods or episcopal convocations.

When men blindly receive instead of revealed truths, the wild fancies of speculative heathens, it is not to be wondered at, if the other parts of their system should be in opposition to the plainest dictates of christianity. Our saviour was frequently under the necessity of correcting the foolish vanity of his messengers, and foreseeing the evil consequences of ambition, he reprobated in the strongest term every desire of pre-eminence among his disciples. Yet how little have either his precepts or his own example been observed. We have seen in the church of Rome, with what ease the best system of religion and morals may be perverted to the most detestable purposes, but
forget

forget, that the same leaven ferments in the bodies glorying in a separation from her, and a reformation, as it is improperly called, of her abuses. The love of pre-eminence is the second circumstance, that has been a fatal hindrance to the progress of christianity. The christian world has been divided into two parts, clergy and laity, distinguished both by dress and manners from each other. The clergy every where affect a superiority, and in consequence claim to be indulged with peculiar power and privileges. It was natural, that when this pre-eminence was once established in the minds of the degraded laity, the clergy should get the countenance of the legislature, for the framing of laws, not only to preserve their own dignity, but to prevent the interference of the people in ecclesiastical concerns. Hence ecclesiastical courts, ecclesiastical ranks and titles, ecclesiastical dress, all repugnant to the spirit of christianity. The laity like brute beasts sit tamely under this usurpation: a man, if a priest or minister enters, is not a master of his own house, he must not thank god for the blessings of providence at his own table, he cannot pledge his faith to a lovely woman without the interference of the priest, his offspring must be sprinkled by sacred hands, and at death he is not committed to his long home without another spiritual incantation.

These superstitious prejudices are without doubt highly beneficial to the interest of the clerical community, but the morals of neither party are consulted. The laity are apt to imagine, that there are some practices, in which they may be indulged without any imputation on their christian character; and the gentleman in black is supposed, to put on a particular set of features and behaviour with his cloaths. The simplicity of the gospel admits nothing of this sort. All christians are equally servants of one common lord, equally bound by his precepts, and equally entitled to the privileges of his religion. It may be necessary to have persons well educated for the instruction of the people and the conducting of the publick worship, but as far as this is regulated by the civil power, the body is political not spiritual. It may be expedient, that one person should conduct the worship of a dissenting congregation, but it is dangerous to associate the performers of this office in a kind of spiritual connection. The dissenters view with an evil eye the visitations of archbishops, bishops, archdeacons etc; but the assemblies of their ministers, whether at the opening of a chapel, the ordaining of a brother minister, or for various other purposes, denote as much love of spiritual pre-eminence, as is to be found in the established church.

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It would be endless to pursue the various evils, that spring out of this strange distinction among christians. Age and abilities command respect, it is willingly paid by every liberal mind and lover of good order; from the profession also of a teacher of christianity it ought not to be withheld. But, let it be kept within due bounds, let not the teacher of a petty meeting claim the authority of a pope, let him not be the means of setting families and congregations at variance. It is a great mistake to suppose, that persecution is confined to established churches; there is a pernicious sort prevailing among sectaries, and to dissent from the society, of which one is a member, is too frequently attended with the loss of an income. Not to omit, that the terms heterodox, heretick, deist, infidel are scattered abroad with great rapidity in dissenting communities, and under pretext of consulting the good of his soul, a narrow-minded congregation will frequently deprive an individual of all his earthly comfort.

The contending parties, whom we are addressing, will however consider this as a digression, and leave to others the care of directing the spiritual concerns and meliorating the religious opinions of mankind. It suffices, that we have pointed out some objects which more immediately call for their attention. Let them endeavour to
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remove the tithes, provide for an amendment of the liturgy, and repeal the test act, and having done this they may safely leave farther improvements on a christian basis to those, who shall by their means be enabled to understand better the principle of true religion.

To every thing, that has been urged in the preceeding pages, two formidable objections occur: first, that the reforms proposed are too numerous, and, secondly, that this is by no means the time to entertain any thoughts of reform. With respect to the number of reforms it may be answered, that we are not to look either to the number or magnitude but to the expediency of them, and farther it is not supposed, that all these reforms should take place at the same time: they are not to be undertaken without due care and deliberation. Still there are some things, which may be put immediately into execution: the game and the test laws may be repealed, a new code of criminal law framed, the liturgy revised, and the boroughs regulated in this session of parliament. And the people seeing, that the house of commons, instead of indulging in so much personal altercation and frivolous panegyrick, is seriously occupied in promoting and improving the welfare of the state, will thankfully receive these presages of better times, and contentedly wait till a longer period shall have put an end to all their grievances.

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The trite argument, that this is not the time to reform, can no longer have any weight on the minds of englishmen. It has been repeated in periods of publick commotion and the profoundest peace. The natural indolence of man may plead for the support of abuses, but the example of a neighbouring nation must surely produce an effect in the cabinet of every monarch. From neglecting to examine and correct the abuses, prevailing through length of time in an extensive empire, we have seen a monarch hurled from his throne, the most powerful nobility in Europe driven from their castles, and the richest hierarchy expelled from their altars. Had the monarch seasonably given up some useless prerogatives, he might still have worn the crown; had the nobility consented to relinquish those feudal privileges, which were designed only for barbarous ages, they might have retained their titles; could the clergy have submitted to be citizens, they might still have been in possession of wealth and influence. The proper time to correct any abuse, and remedy any grievance, is the instant, they are known; if neglected they continue to increase, till the ruling powers are in fear for their own safety, and being overawed by the party, interested in corruption, they can neither retreat nor proceed without endangering the common weak.

Happily

Happily for this country we are in a very different situation. There is no party to overawe the government, and the people are united to give its measures effectual support. Nothing can be forced upon it: every reform must proceed from, and be under the direction of the ruling powers. How much then is it to be desired, that such an opportunity of setting government on its best foundation should not be lost, and that a timely removal of every grievance may render the name of another revolution disgustful to englishmen. Should this opportunity be lost, it may never occur again. The discontented party, for there is, we have been informed by high authority, one sufficiently numerous to excite alarm, may increase and by dwelling upon real evils undermine that power, which was resolved not to listen to any terms of reconciliation. Whatever may be our fate with respect to foreign nations, peace and union are the greatest objects at home.

Let the republicans be moderate in their demands, the anti-republicans not pertinacious in opposing every reform, and government, strengthened by the accession of both parties to it as a centre of union, will present to the world a compact body, firmly united to preserve an improving constitution, and to promote the publick happiness.

4 AP 62

F I N I S,

A P P E N D I X,

On the Execution of Louis Capet.

LOUIS CADET has afforded an excellent topick for parliamentary declaration. Let us strip the subject of figures of rhetorick, and no englishman need be alarmed at the execution of an individual at Paris. Louis Capet was once king of France, and entitled to the honours due to that exalted station. The supreme power in the nation declared, that France should be a republick: from that moment Louis Capet lost his titles. He was accused of enormous crimes, confined as a state prisoner, tried by the national convention, found guilty, condemned, and executed. What is there wonderful in all this? Our revolution, the boast of the present days, pursued the same conduct as nearly as possible, Our convention declared, that James the 2d. should be no longer king: it did not chuse to abolish kingship, but dignified William the 3d. with legal honours. James was stripped of his titles, and became plain James Stuart, and the republican William became a sovereign. James was not tried, condemned, executed, because he saved his life by flight: but the laws against himself and his son, and the proceedings in the years fifteen and forty five must convince the most superficial reasoner, that the maxims of the english

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and french nations, with respect to the dethroning of kings, are exactly the same. But some one will say, Louis Capet was unjustly condemned. Ninety-nine out of a hundred, who make this objection, have not given themselves the trouble of examining the records of the trial: and why should I give greater credit to the remaining objectour than to the verdict of the court? If Louis Capet did, when king, encourage the invasion of his country, however we may be inclined to pity the unfortunate man for the error of his conduct, we have no right to proclaim him innocent in point of law. It is in short no business of ours, and if all the crowned heads on the continent are taken off, it is no business of ours. We should be unworthy of the constitution settled at the revolution, and enemies to the Brunswick family now seated on our throne, if we denied to any nation the right of settling, as it pleased, its own internal government. These sentiments do not prevent us from commiserating the situation of the french refugees. They are entitled to our compassion: and it is but right, that we should attend to their distresses, since foreign countries have been put to the expence of maintaining those refugees from our own island, who, for their attachment to an ancient family were, by the rivalry of the two foreign reigns, subjected to all the penalties exacted from recusants by the present government in France.

The Effect of War on the Poor.

THREE days after the debate on the king's message, I was walking from my friend's house to the neighbouring town to inspect the printing of these few sheets, and in my way joined company with two men of the village, who, being employed by the woolstaplers to let out spinning to the poor, had lately received orders to lower the value of labour. We were talking on this subject, when the exclamations of a groupe of poor women going to market overhearing our conversation made an impression on my mind, which all the eloquence of the houses of lords and commons cannot efface. We are to be sconced three-pence in the shilling, let others work for me, I'll not. We are to be sconced a fourth part of our labour. What is all this for? I did not dare to tell them what it was for, nor to add insult to misery. What is the beheading of a monarch to them? What is the navigation of the Scheldt to them? What is the freedom of a great nation to them but reason for joy? Yet the debating only on these subjects has reached their cottages. They are already sconced three pence in the shilling. What must be their fate, when we suffer under the most odious scourge of the human race, and the accumulation of taxes takes away

away half of that daily bread, which is scarce sufficient at present for their support?

Oh! that I had the warning voice of an anti-ent prophet, that I might penetrate into the inmost recesses of palaces, and appall the haranguers of senates. I would use no other language than that of the poor market women. I would cry aloud in the ears of the first magistrate, we are sconded three-pence in the shilling, the fourth part of our labour, for what? I would address myself to the deliberating bodies: we are sconded three-pence in the shilling, the fourth part of our labours, for what? Is there a man, that could stand out against this eloquence? Yes. Thousands. Three-pence in the shilling for spinning conveys no ideas to them. They know not what a cottage is, they know not how the poor live, how they make up their scanty meal. Perhaps there may be some one in our house of commons, whose feelings are in union with mine; communicate them to your colleagues, impress them with the horror attendant on their deliberations, tell them what the deduction of three-pence in the shilling occasions among the myriads of England. And should any grave courtier pitying the distresses of the poor be anxious to relieve them, say to him; there is an easy method: let the first magistrate, the peers, the representatives of the people, the rich men of the nation

nation, all who are for war, be sconded one fourth part of their annual income to defray the expence of it. Let them be the first sufferers, let the burden fall on them, not on the poor. Alas ! my poor countrymen, how many years calamity awaits you before a single dish or a glass of wine will be withdrawn from the tables of opulence.

At this moment perhaps the decree is gone forth for war. Let others talk of glory, let others celebrate the heroes, who are to deluge the world with blood, the words of the poor market women will still resound in my ears, we are sconded three-pence in the shilling, one fourth of our labour. For what !

F I N I S.

...with you for what is to be done
...of their annual income to be given
...Let them be the first to
...all on them, not on the poor
...how many years
...of which will be withdrawn from the ranks of
...of them.

At this moment perhaps the desire is going
forth for war. Let others talk of glory, let
others celebrate the heroes, who are to deliver
the world with blood, the words of the poor-market
women will still resound in my ears, we are
tired of our labour, one fourth of our labour, for what!

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